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TE IKA A MAUI,  
OR  
NEW ZEALAND AND ITS INHABITANTS

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THE OLD PRIEST OF WAIKOWAU, WEST COAST.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

CIVILIZED man is too apt to look down upon the more unenlightened portion of his race as belonging to an inferior order of beings; ignorance or interest have given rise to many calumnies against the aboriginal inhabitants of remote lands, especially against those who differ from us in color. It becomes a sufficient plea with those who regard themselves of

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the higher race to depress and destroy the inferior. This has been the fruitful cause of the greatest enormities: man has treated his fellow men as beasts of the field, and has bought and sold them as such: it is only in the present generation that an effort has been made to efface this blot on our boasted civilization, and even yet the Anglo-American Christian maintains its lawfulness. Whole races of aborigines have disappeared; they have not been considered as entitled to hold their own inheritance. The entire continent of America was taken away from its inhabitants and solemnly bestowed by the Roman Pontiff, on those who went to plunder and destroy them; and even in our own colonies, how much have we to blush for! The Australian has been shot and poisoned and plundered of his lands; the Tasmanian was hunted with dogs and exterminated, and that too by the authority of government itself. In New Zealand, there is little doubt something similar would have taken place, if the natives had not been too numerous, too warlike, and too intelligent to be thus dealt with; otherwise the order to seize all their waste lands, as they were styled, would doubtless have been attempted; but even these qualifications would have been of little avail, had not the Almighty cast his shield over them as a portion of the household of faith.

To raise a better and more correct view, of those commonly regarded as savages, we must have a more perfect acquaintance with them, and the more intimate this is, the more readily shall we allow their claims to brotherhood, and feel assured, from whatever causes they have fallen into their present degraded state, that it is not their natural one, but the effect of various untoward circumstances, which have combined, gradually to sink them, from a higher to a lower position; and when those causes are removed, they will again rise to their former standing, and rank with the most favored sections of the human family.

As our knowledge of these aboriginal races increases, and we become acquainted with their language, manners, and customs, we find that they possess mind as well as ourselves, and only want similar advantages to obtain an equal enlarge-

ment of it. Our ideas are so different from those of these primitive and isolated people, that theirs may seem at first to betoken an inferiority of mind; but when we can enter into the causes, which have operated in producing that difference, we must allow the result to have been quite natural.

Philosophically viewing the subject, we should find that even the Australian, who has been classed in the lowest grade, and been viewed as more closely allied to the brute than to the human species, possesses mind, ingenuity, contrivance, and perfection too, in his way, far beyond what might be expected; and that were we to place one of our own laborers, or even a more enlightened member of society, in a similar position, it would be a long time before he could attain, an equal degree of knowledge, in any of those arts, which are needful for the support of life.

This is no fanciful assertion. How many instances have we of shipwrecked mariners being cast on uninhabited islands, who, deprived of everything, have not shown any of their ingenuity, in procuring food and raiment; and when in similar circumstances they have been cast amongst savages, have in general sunk even below their level. Excepting perhaps the backwoodsman of America, few would feel themselves equal to supply their necessities, when their usual means of support were suddenly cut off. Travellers in countries like Australia or New Zealand, where all the comforts of civilized life are wanting, well know how apt they are to forget the proprieties of society, and how readily they fall into the habits of the native; the customs of domestic life become irksome, and are abandoned; the squalid filth of those who have made a long journey, is often far beyond that of the natives; but in obtaining food, how far is the boasted member of civilized life, behind the despised savage. The native of New Holland not only knows where to look for it, but how to obtain it; he can fabricate from the raw materials of the wilderness, the proper snare or net; he can make his spear and use it with unflinching success, and barren and unproductive as his country appears to us, in furnishing natural food, it has a sufficiency for those who know how to find and take it. There are several instances

recorded of convicts, who have made their escape and fled to the woods, with the idea that they could reach China overland; many of them, being utterly unable to procure food, have returned and given themselves up to the authorities, and others have killed one another, to eke out their miserable existence; and, after all, been compelled to surrender themselves up from extreme want.

If, under such circumstances, the native has been enabled to find support, where the European could not—and the preservation of life is the first principle implanted in the human mind—we may safely conclude he is not deficient in mind. But how much more is this the case with the New Zealander. Some few years ago, the Governor caused a Settlers' Journey along the west coast of the Middle Island to be published in the *Government Gazette*: this settler, accompanied by several natives, was absent nearly two years; during that period all his own stock failed, and for many weeks he was entirely dependent on the natives for the supply of his commissariat: had they not known where and how to procure food in that uninhabited part, the entire party must have perished.\*

But to return to the subject of civilization. With us society is divided to an indefinite extent; one is brought up in one useful art, and another in another; with few exceptions there are none who can turn their hands to any other, than their own peculiar calling. The New Zealander, on the contrary, is acquainted with every department of knowledge, common to his race: he can build his house, he can make his canoe, his nets, his hooks, his lines; he can manufacture snares to suit every bird; he can form his traps for the rat; he can fabricate his garments, and every tool and implement he requires, whether for agriculture or war; he can make ornaments of ivory or of the hardest stone, and these too with the most simple and apparently unsuitable instruments, sawing his ivory without loss, with a muscle-shell, and his hard green jade stone one piece with another, with only the addition of a

\* See *Brenner's Journal of Expedition along the West Coast of the Middle Island of New Zealand*.

little sand and water ; and all these works, it must be remembered, he could accomplish without the aid of iron, which was unknown before Cook's time. It was not a single individual or a few that were adepts in these various arts, but every one. The implements they made, they also knew how to use ; they could hunt, they could fish, they could fight. In the battlefield they were warriors, in the council they were orators ; their skill in military tactics has elicited the wonder of our military men, and their late war with the government has done much to raise them in our estimation. It would be no easy matter, to find any European who, in so many respects, could equal the despised savage of New Zealand.

Such general knowledge makes the native at home wherever he may be. I have often had opportunities of admiring this ; when encamped with my little party in pouring rain, I have been surprised at the short time it took, to erect a comfortable shed impervious to the rain, to produce fire by friction, to find fuel and ignite it, to seek out food and sit down comfortably to enjoy it, and this before an European would have made up his mind what to do. An instance of this kind occurred some years ago, when the late Allan Cunningham, the well-known botanist of Australia and New Zealand, was accompanied by one of our missionaries on a journey through a New Zealand forest : whilst busily employed in examining its varied productions, they allowed their natives to push on to a spot where they usually encamped, and carried away by their love of nature, they did not perceive the lapse of time, until they were suddenly overtaken by the shades of night ; to make their uncomfortable position worse, it set in rainy ; to overtake their companions was impossible, for such is the gloom of New Zealand forests, and the over-grown ill-defined tracks through them, that it is quite impossible to find the way along them in the dark ; but, instead of trying to erect a shed, or light a fire in the native style, what did they do ? Just what most Europeans would in similar circumstances—they did nothing at all ; they felt themselves perfectly helpless—they stood under a tree the whole of the night, without fire, without food, and without shelter. The effects of that night proved fatal to pōor

Cunningham; he caught a violent cold, which settled on his lungs, and in a few months brought him to his grave.

The native is not deficient in those arts which are essential to his comfort. His house is constructed with great skill and elegance,\* his garments with much beauty, and ornamented with a border of elaborately wrought embroidery; his little farm is tilled with the greatest care, not a weed to be seen; in fact he has carried those arts with which he is acquainted, to as much perfection, as they are apparently capable of. This is not the character of the savage. If, then, in these respects we cannot view him as such, it must be in his social state; their cruel and bloody wars, their cannibal feasts,—these mark the savage. The truth cannot be concealed, neither is it desirable to do so; but is not human nature in its unrenewed state, much the same everywhere? Are there no European savages as well?

When we consider the way in which the New Zealanders lived, we cannot wonder at the crimes they committed. Shut out from the rest of the world, without any to set them a pattern of what was right, or to reprove what was wrong; is it surprising, that morally they should have degenerated, even from the standard of their forefathers? They were not always addicted to war, neither were they always cannibals; the remembrance of the origin of these horrid customs, is still preserved amongst them. If the progressive development doctrine were true, aboriginal races should have progressively advanced; every successive generation should have added some improvement to the one which preceded it; but such is not the case. A remarkable proof of this may be adduced in the fact, that the New Zealanders have retrograded, even since the days of Captain Cook; they then possessed large double canoes, decked, with houses on them, similar to those of

\* The natives rendered valuable assistance in this sort of work (building houses for the Port Nicholson settlers), at which they were very expert. It must be confessed that the huts built by them were much superior to those of our handiwork; many of them, indeed, deserved to be called houses, and were, when I quitted Port Nicholson, still used by emigrants of all classes.—4th page of *Hon. H. W. Petre's New Zealand*: Smith, Elder, & Co., Lond. 1841.

Tahaiti and Hawaii, in which, traditionally, some of their ancestors came. It is now nearly half a century since the last was seen. Tradition also states, that they had finer garments in former days, and of different kinds; that, like their reputed ancestors, they made cloth from the bark of trees; the name is preserved, but the manufacture has ceased. There are remains also in their language, which would lead us to suppose, that like the inhabitants of Tonga, they once possessed a kingly form of government, and though they have now no term to express that high office, still they have words, which are evidently derived from the very one denoting a king in Tonga.\* Their traditions, which are preserved, also establish the same fact, and perhaps one of the strongest proofs is their language; its fullness, its richness, its close affinity not only in words but grammar to the Sanscrit, carry us back to a time when literature could not have been unknown.

To what then can we refer their subsequent deterioration? They tell us they came from a distant land; the cradle of their race was an island of narrow limits; insufficient to maintain its population, one portion thrust out the other: a fleet of canoes left to seek another habitation; they met with several, which, either being too contracted, or being inhabited by people averse to their stay, they again embarked, and finally a few, reduced to the greatest straits, at last reached New Zealand. These repeated emigrations must have diminished the original stock of knowledge; like a vessel in a storm which is compelled to be lightened, the richest wares are thrown overboard, one bale follows another, the least required for the preservation of life go first, and those only which are essentially necessary are preserved. Again, one tribe is driven away by a more powerful one; weakened in numbers, and disheartened by constant defeats, it continually retires from its foes, until, at last, without means of preserving its first state, it sinks lower and lower in the scale of existence: this will account for the degraded state of the original inhabitants of the Chatham Isles; driven from the mainland, they fled to

\* The word *How* in Tonga signifies king; in Maori, *Waka-hau* is to command.

islands possessing few natural productions ; we cannot, therefore, wonder, that they should be less advanced than the natives who conquered them ; hence their inferiority in their garments, their houses, their canoes ; these latter are rudely constructed of a frame-work of poles, a sort of wicker-work, the interstices being filled up with sea weed : their houses are miserable holes in the earth, roofed over ; there they sleep with their children huddled up between their naked thighs for warmth ; even the Maori call them *Parakiwara* (black fellows).

They present an instance to what a sad state man may fall, when cut off from the rest of his race, and mind is deprived of the benefit of fellow mind ; how unable it is to bear up against such accumulated evils ; how forcibly does such a state remind us of the prodigal, who, from being clothed in fine apparel, with a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet, and from being fed with the choicest viands, when he leaves his father's house, falls step by step, morally and physically, until he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat. May not this beautiful parable have its literal fulfilment in the history of the New Zealand race ; in it may we not behold one of the long lost tribes of Israel, which, with its fellows, having abandoned the service of the true God, and cast aside his Word, fell step by step in the scale of civilization ; deprived of a fixed home, became nomade wanderers over the steppes of Asia, a bye-word and a reproach among the nations, and gradually retreated until in the lapse of ages they reached the sea, and thence, still preserving their wandering character, from island to island driven by winds and currents, and various causes, they finally reached New Zealand, and there fallen to their lowest state of degradation, given up to the fiercest passions, consumed, and being consumed, they are enabled to reflect, repent, and amend, and resolve to arise and go to their Father.

Even after the New Zealand race had sufficiently increased to colonize the two islands, there was no bond of union amongst them ; split into innumerable families and tribes, each under its own peculiar head and independent of the rest, it is not to be wondered, that constant feuds should



have occurred, and that the fiercer passions should have been called into action? Their history in this respect is only a counterpart of that of the Heptarchy, when one petty prince was ever warring with another, or with that state which existed, to a later period, amongst the Irish and the Highlanders of Scotland, almost up to the present generation. If even the traditions which remain of the savage feuds and atrocities of those hostile clans, were to be compared with the New Zealander's, it is doubtful which would be thought most savage.

The Tapu was a remarkable institution; it did not originate with the Maori—he brought it with him; it was of wide-spread observance, extending from Tonga to Tahiti, and thence to the Sandwich Isles. Severe and bloody as it was, in its demands, it was still, as Polynesian society was constituted, politic and wise; in fact it was the only bond of union which existed, and kept them from committing greater excesses. It must be remembered that they were heathen—they knew not God, and great as their sins were, they were not against light and knowledge, but committed with darkened understandings. Compare their warfare, as heathen, with that of civilized Christians; the sack of a town—whether by French or English—and then what shall we say of savage warfare. Compare the war which the misguided patriots of New Zealand carried on with the British Governor in 1845-7 with that of the French in Algeria during the same period. The sack of Kororareka with the destruction of an Arab tribe. The conduct of Hone Heke, the New Zealand chief, with that of the French commander. The same paper recorded both. Of the natives it said, “they have hitherto enjoyed their triumph without cruelty;” in fact, the Governor himself lauded the chivalric conduct of Heke. But when the Oulad Riahs, a wild mountain tribe, vainly endeavoured to preserve their independence against French aggression, and fled with their wives and children to their caves, and were completely at the mercy of their enemies, who had only to blockade the entrance to make them submit to their terms, the French officer commanded his men to stop up the entrances with combustible

materials, and then set fire to them, and to keep those fires burning the whole of the night. We can scarcely imagine anything more horrible. The graphic pen of a witness has recorded, "in the morning all was still; the soldiers entered the caves, and found piles of men, women, and children at the breast, with convulsed features, showing the horrid agonies they had endured, and in that state no feeling of remorse or pity was felt, but the soldiers had nerve enough to plunder the corpses of their jewels!" At one fell blow from 800 to 1000 human beings thus fearfully perished!! And this too in the nineteenth century, and, as the eye witness of this horrid holocaust states, the "perpetrators belonged to a nation boasting itself pre-eminently, as the most polite and civilized in the world;" and, in addition too, he might have said, professedly Christian, as well.

After Kororareka fell into Heke's hands, he allowed the inhabitants to re-enter their houses, and carry off their chief valuables; he spared the churches and the houses of the ministers; and after the battle was terminated, he was not guilty of a single act of cruelty, but showed great feeling and forbearance; though from mistaken views he took up arms, he did not forget, that he was a responsible being.

The New Zealanders were cannibals, and great ones too. Christian light and knowledge gradually opened their eyes to see how horrid and unnatural the custom was, and in 1844 the last known act of cannibalism took place. If we seek to ascertain the origin of this custom, we shall doubtless find it in want, which has caused even our own countrymen, when reduced to starvation, to have recourse to the same dreadful expedient for preserving life.\* New Zealand had no land animals, and their constant wars often destroyed the only crops on which they had to depend for winter subsistence; the consequence was frequent famines; to such straits have they been reduced that there are traditions of men killing and eating even their own wives and children. Can we then wonder that they should eat the bodies of those slain in fight. Still there were

\* See *Cruise of the Blonde*, by Licut. Dampier.